

TESTIMONY OF SONJA ZANDRI
IN OPPOSITION TO

***H.B. No. 6367 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS.**

Senator Slossberg and Representative Abercrombie and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Sonja Zandri. I am the owner of Brookside Home Residential Care Home in Danbury, Connecticut and a Past President of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes (CARCH). I am unable to testify in person today but wanted to offer my testimony on the Governor's Budget, specifically against the capping of residential care home rates and elimination of the partial rate increase from last year.

The state has capped residential care home rates for the past three years before we received a small increase last year. This year's budget not only caps rates but removes that small but much needed increase from last year. We have used the increase to give staff a well deserved raise since they've had none in 3 years. Food, liability insurance and health care prices have all gone way up. Electric and gas have also gone up. I cannot go to my vendors and tell them, "Sorry, but I need to cut you due to frozen rates!"

Residential care homes are a great value to the state of Connecticut. We offer room and board, three meals a day, laundry, housekeeping, activities and assistance with bathing along with companionship. We do all this for \$2196.69 a month. This amount would go back to \$2141.94 under the proposed budget. In my home, we also take residents out for shopping and we drive them to their doctors and spend the time to sit with them for support and understanding. We have residents that have lived with us for over 25 years! This is truly a home, not just a business...and isn't that the point?

I am on the CARCH Board and have twice been president of the board. I have always been the contact person when someone has a problem or question. I hear a constant rumbling going on with many homes on the verge of closing due to all the cuts in our state. Most of us just can't do it anymore and we are losing heart. We've always been a place to take in persons with mental disabilities. We do our best to give them a safe and happy home and hopefully stay out of the hospital. In this day, we don't need persons with disabilities on the street because our homes are closing.

We've also been given new state regulations that have increased our cost. Some homes have med certification which saves the state a lot in not having visiting nurses come in to administer meds. Yet, these same homes that save the state money are being punished with increased liability insurance due to a "risk."

We had 139 homes in 1975 when I started this business. Now, we are down to 99 homes. So, in closing, we ask that you PLEASE raise the RCH rates. Without an increase, homes throughout the state may close, and many of the residents will be forced into more expensive forms of facilities and that is the ugly truth.

Sonja Zandri, owner of Brookside Rest Home, 203-740-0488